1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5

During the festival of Kētrappa at Bengōr, the Poleyas may not be seen by any high caste villager till the eighteenth day of the festival, but on the eighteenth evening they march in procession with pipe and drum to the Kētrappa temple and watch the ritual from a nearby knoll. They bring offerings of fowls to Kētrappa, and the birds are decapitated by Mēdas, who have an important part in the festival. The Kētrappa festival seems to be an extreme instance of the exclusion of Poleyas. In the festivals of other village-deities they participate to a greater extent, though on a different level from the rest.

Every village has an hereditary headman called *takka*. It is the headman's duty to see that the village greens (*mandus*) where dances and dinners are held, and the village assembly meets, are kept in good condition. He has to ensure that the bridges and ferries in the village are in constant repair and that the village tank is clean. He has to look after pilgrims and travellers passing through the village.

Coorgs have a keen appreciation of leadership and precedence. From their folklore it appears as though they are incapable of conceiving of any group, of no matter what, without a leader. The epithet consistently applied to a headman is '*mūpayanda*' which means 'precedence-having'. A sense of precedence and respect for seniority helped to introduce order into their meetings, just as a respect for precedents produced a consistent body of decisions on any particular matter.

Formerly a headman wielded great influence in his village (or *nāḍ*), and a good headman was a powerful factor for stability. If the headman was a bad man, the entire village was ruined: as a proverb has it, 'when the *takka* is a loafer the entire village is like the area inhabited by Untouchables'. In the management of village affairs and the settlement of village disputes the headman was assisted by an assembly consisting of the representatives of the various *okkas* in the village. The assembly was called *kūṭa*, which means a 'gathering' or 'group'. It met on one of the several greens in the village. There were separate village greens for transacting business (*panchāyati mandu*), for dancing at the harvest festival (*ūr mandu*), a third for dancing at the festival of the village-deity (*dēvara mandu*), and so on. Sometimes there was a roofed enclosure (*ambala*) on the green, which provided shelter from rain and sun for the assembly to meet, and for women to watch the dances.

The village-assemblies were far more powerful in the past than

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they are today. They controlled the public conduct of a Coorg very thoroughly. The principal sanctions at the disposal of the assembly were *poḷévāḍu* or fine, and *poramaḍi* or excommunication. There was a regular scale of fines laying down the maximum that could be levied on an individual, and on an entire *okka*, village, or *nāḍ*. The maximum fine on a village headman guilty of an offence was very much higher than the maximum for an ordinary individual, and similarly, the maximum for a *nāḍ*-headman was higher than that for a village-headman.

Fines are levied for minor offences such as failure to attend a communal dance or hunt, or to observe the requisite food restrictions during the festival of a village-deity. Failure to pay the fine resulted in the guilty person being excommunicated from the village. He was not permitted to attend the village-assembly or a communal dance or hunt. He was not allowed to enter the village temple or take part in the festival of the village-deity,[1] but he was allowed to remain in any house in which he had a right to stay, such as his natal house, or his wife's natal house. The guilty person could resume his normal social status after he had paid the fine, half of which went to the village temple and the other half to the elders who levied the fine.

Serious offences were punished by the offender's being excommunicated from caste. Such a punishment was usually for a prescribed period, during which the offender was not entitled to stay or dine even in his natal house. Not only was he prohibited from attending a dance or hunt, but he was also prohibited from going into any house in the village. The barber was not allowed to shave him, the washerman was not allowed to wash his clothes, and similarly artisan castes could not make anything for him. Even his cattle were not allowed to graze on the common pasture.

After the prescribed period of punishment was over, the offender had to go on a pilgrimage to Bhāgamaṇḍla where the river Kanaké joins the Kāvēri. He had to have his head and faced shaved, and bathe in the sin-cleansing waters of the sacred Kāvēri. He then went to the temple of Bhagaṇḍēshwara for worship, and this was followed by a visit to the source of the River Kāvēri, which is probably the most sacred spot in Coorg. He bathed in the bigger of the two springs and worshipped the smaller spring. He then

[1] A person polluted by the occurrence of a birth or death suffers from similar disabilities.

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796 During the harvest festival a party of villagers go from house to
533 house, and at each house they visit they sing the 'house song',
622 which gives an account of the ancestors of that house. After the
[574] song is sung, the singers are treated to refreshments and given gifts of money.

The singers are required to visit the village-headman's house first. Similarly, the people who put on fancy dress during the harvest festival have to visit the village-headman's house first.

For a week before the beginning of the harvest festival all the adult males in the village gather together at the village-headman's house every evening before proceeding to the green to practise the dances and play some games. The guests are treated to a light
[574] repast, after which the headman asks someone to take up a *duḍi* (small drum) and sing. The person who is asked to sing may not
[681] refuse, and refusal is punishable by fine. Even the temple-headman is not exempt from this rule.

At the Kundat Bhadrakāḷi festival, the villagers frequently move about in processions during the last few days of the festival. At the head of these processions walks the *nāḍ*-headman's wife carrying
[778] a dish-lamp. A dish-lamp has ritual value, and it is essential on every ritual occasion, and it is the privilege of the *nāḍ*-headman's wife to carry it at the festival of Kundat Bhadrakāli.

178 The political and economic forces set in motion in the last 120
622 years have been responsible for certain structural inconsistencies
596 coming to the surface during festivals. It was not always the headman's *okka* which benefited from the new economic and educational opportunities. The *okkas* which benefited from the latter could ignore with impunity the headman's position and authority. Frequently the headman accepted the changed situation, and this not only failed to solve the conflict for supremacy between him and the newly rich *okkas* but instead accentuated it. The latter, having secured wealth and official positions, tried to secure headmanship too. Disputes became frequent.

[556] The breakdown of the traditional economy meant that frequently the headman could not fulfil the duties of hospitality periodically required of him; and when the headman was unable to perform his duties, he found it difficult to insist on others
178 performing their duties towards him. People began to gravitate to
622 the new centres of power, the officials and rich men.

627 Formerly, people used to take their disputes to their headman

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5

The offender has to appear before the council of the elders of the village, at the Ambala (a council-room on the village green), where the matter is investigated and discussed. The presiding Takka pronounces the sentence which may amount to a maximum fine of rupees 10. Should the offender refuse to pay, he will be excommunicated, when he may appeal to the "Nád-mukyastaru", that is the assembly of all the village Takkas of the district, and their decision is final. An outcast Coorg may after years be restored to his former status on paying the imposed fine. To the influence of these guardians of public morality the orderly conduct of the Coorgs in public is principally owing. It is, however, to be feared, that the increasing wealth and influence of many Coorg houses modify the strict control of the Takkas and make them more complaisant to the rich, which tendency will inevitably result in a decline of their authority and a greater laxity of public morality. Intemperance, which in the times of the Rajahs was rigorously repressed, is now rather encouraged by the numerous liquor shops, which are decidedly on the increase all over the country. It requires a new impulse on the part of the better type of Coorgs to combine in vigorous combat, especially during their festivities, against this ruinous enemy, and a victory gained on this field will be more glorious and beneficial to the Coorgs than their repeated triumphs over their Mahomedan antagonists of old. When the Coorgs have once embraced the truth of Christianity and placed themselves under the regenerating influence of the Gospel, they will become a noble race, probably not much inferior in bodily, moral and intellectual powers to their present European Rulers!

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5

officers, both since dismissed from the King's and Company's service, had imagined the British were going to declare war against him, and was consequently fortifying his country; and I supposed the work-people were employed on some strong place in the neighbourhood. Having obtained special permission for myself and companions, I determined that I would immediately undeceive him, as an act of kindness to both parties.

Rising very early on the 25th, we took a quiet walk in the garden, and returning up-stairs, were followed by Mahomed Sahib, the butler, who entreated to speak with me in private, and to request Lieutenant Meredith to remain in the verandah, to prevent any one from listening. This we acquiesced in; and no sooner were we alone in the bed-chamber, than he threw himself at my feet, and entreated me, by the memory of his old master, to save his life. I was perfectly thunderstruck; raised him up, and desired him to explain himself; when he told me a tale which harrowed my soul. The four Bengalees, whom I had left fat and happy, had become dissatisfied with promises, and wages protracted and never paid; they had demanded their dismissal, and had, in consequence, been inhumanly murdered. He himself had applied for leave, and was immediately mulcted of all he had, and his thumbs squeezed in screws, made on purpose, and used in native courts; his body flagellated, and a threat held out, that the next offence would be punished with death. That the Rájah being acknowledged as the God of the country, exercised the supposed right without remorse and without control. That, for instance, if a poor fellow, standing in his presence, with both hands joined in adoration as of the Supreme, incessantly calling out Mahá Swámi! or Great God! should be suddenly bit by a musquito, and loosen his hands to scratch; a sign too well known, would instantly be made by this *soidisant* Deity, and the poor wretch be a head shorter

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5

had some ambition to shine as a poet. Some of his pieces, addressed to one of his wives, are still preserved. They have no merit, and were perhaps made for him. However, he may have been a Nero in a small way. Cruelty seems to have been his sport. He liked to kill his victims with his own hand, with gun, bow or knife. For small offences people had their ears cropped, their noses cut, or their tongues clipped. For an impertinent answer men or women had their mouths rinsed, that was the phrase, i. e. their lips were cut off all round their mouths, and they were left to perish without food or drink. Others were thrown down a precipice on the hill side, near the "Rájah's seat" in Mercara. Many seem to have been destroyed merely for the purpose of confiscating their property, for Lingarája had as great a passion for gold as for blood.

During the first years of his reign he was restrained from giving full vent to his atrocious propensities by the influence of his Devan, Kshauryakere Appanna, who seems to have been a man of character and independence, bold enough to lecture the tyrant whom he had placed on the throne in preference to the rule of a stranger, the Rájah of Sóde. But by degrees Lingarája became impatient of the control of a subject. Appanna, relying on the Rájah's gratitude, continued to exhort, to warn and, at times, to resist his master. He had mistaken his man. One day the Devan was seized and carried before the Rájah. He was charged with treason. He knew, that he was doomed. The Rájah himself conducted the investigation. "Confess your guilt," he cried. "I am guilty indeed," replied the intrepid minister, "of one crime, of having made a wretch like you, Rájah of Coorg." Lingarája was mad with rage. Appanna, with several other so called accomplices, was carried out into the jungle to a distance of some miles. There they were nailed to some large trees, the Rájah feasting his eyes on the torments of his help-

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692 Panchâyat lay to the Párapatiagár or to the Devân's Kacheri. The Párapatiagár settled at his own responsibility or through a Panchâyat cases of small amount which, however, remained undefined.

685 When *theft* was committed in a village, the Gauda with the ryots exerted themselves to catch the thief and on apprehension carried him to the Párapatiagár's Kacheri, where an enquiry was made, the stolen property, if possible, recovered and restored to the owner with an award of half the value of the stolen property as a punishment of the thief. In default
● 681 of payment, he was flogged or sentenced to work on the roads.
565 *Corporal punishment* was not restricted to any class of crime or people; even Devâna, who had incurred the displeasure of the Rájahs, were subjected to the last, some times swung by the royal hand!

682 In *murder cases*, the Párapatiagárs and the Subadár of the district committed the criminal for trial to the Huzur, the
692 officials of which, under orders from the Rájah, examined the prisoner and reported the result. According to circumstances the murderer would be pardoned, fined, whipped, mutilated
684 or executed, agreeably to the Rájah's orders. In *cases of adultery* the guilty parties were severely and barbarously punished. *Manslaughter* committed in a state of intoxication
682 or during hunting or whilst guarding the crops against wild beasts, was leniently dealt with, especially if the unfortunate man reported the accident voluntarily before the Huzur had
684 been informed of it. *Eloping from the country* and *treasonable*
687 *acts against the Sirkar* were considered as the most heinous crimes, and the culprit, if caught, seldom escaped capital
096 punishment, dictated with a savage vindictiveness. Of the nature of these punishments it is difficult to credit the stories, that are told of their frequency and ferocity. The ordinary ones are said to have been: crushing to death by elephants, strangulation or decapitation by the large Coorg knife, a most

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78. The Nád- and the Táluq-Panchâyats shall be composed of respectable inhabitants, or Chettics, or merchants. When the parties in suits are of different castes, the Párapatiagárs or Subadárs shall, if practicable, select an equal number of persons of the caste, to which each party may belong and also one or two of a caste different from that of either of the parties. The same rule shall be observed by the Daryáft-Kacheri.

79. Appeals against the decision of a Párapatiagár shall be made to the Subadár within 30 days from the date on which the award may be passed and given to the party; and those against the decision of the Subadárs shall be made to the Daryáft-Kacheri within 45 days. If after the expiration of this time the party appealing assign good and satisfactory reason for his delay, the appeal shall be admitted. Provided, however, that no appeal shall be admitted from any case decided by a Panchâyat, except on the ground of gross partiality or dishonesty on the part of the arbitrators.

80. The expense of summoning shall be paid in the first instance by the party by whom they are summoned; but the functionary or the Panchâyat shall determine, when the award is passed, by whom the expense shall be finally borne according to the merits of the case.

Criminal Justice.

81. The Gauda is authorised to reprimand or admonish an offender for stealing vegetables, or a few seers of grain, or the commission of similar trifling offences within the jurisdiction of his village. He shall seize and make over all other offenders to the Párapatiagárs.

82. The Párapatiagár shall confine for 10 days, or fine in a sum not exceeding five rupees, according to the circumstances of the case, any offender charged with disobedience

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692 of orders, or with assaulting another person, or using abusive
671 language or with stealing property of the value of 10 rupees.
177 83. The Párapatiagár may release persons accused of the
881 above offences on their finding bail.

84. All persons deserving higher punishment than what has been mentioned above, shall be sent to the Subadár by whom they shall be tried. The Subadár shall confine for 30 days, or fine in a sum not exceeding 16 rupees, according to the circumstances of the case, any person accused of having stolen property of the value of from 10 to 30 rupees, or charged with disobedience of orders or with assaulting another person or using abusive language.

[694] 85. The Subadár may release persons accused of these offences on their finding bail.

86. Offenders accused of thefts not attended with violence
692 and of which the amount or value may be above thirty and
671 not exceeding one hundred rupees, or of the other offences
177 specified in para 84, but deserving a higher punishment than
[685] what is therein mentioned, shall be sent for trial to the Daryáft-Kacheri. In these cases the Daryáft-Kacheri is empowered to sentence an offender to imprisonment not exceeding two months, or to levy a fine not exceeding twenty rupees. This Kacheri may release persons on bail.

[694] 87. The Párapatiagárs and Subadárs are directed to send
[681] with the least practicable delay to the Daryáft-Kacheri all persons accused of thefts attended with violence or exceeding in amount or value thirty rupees, burglaries, highway or gang robberies, arson and murder, etc. after they are apprehended, together with their depositions.

[623] 88. The Daryáft-Kacheri assisted by the Panchayat shall make enquiries into the aforementioned cases, and in the event of their finding the fact against the accused, they shall submit their proceedings to the Commissioner (respective Superintendent since October 1834) who shall pass judgment thereon.

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89. The numbers of the Panchâyat shall in no case be less than five nor more than thirteen. The prisoner shall have the power of challenging any of the members as far as the number five, before the commencement of the enquiry, assigning reasons for the same, which shall be taken into consideration by the Daryâft-Kacheri. In the event of these reasons being deemed valid, the member who is challenged shall be removed and another substituted. The majority of the Panchâyat shall concur in the verdict, whether in civil or criminal cases, to render it valid. 692 671 177 [623]

90. Corporal punishment by the officers of Government is prohibited in every possible case throughout the whole of Coorg. [681]

91. There are three modes of passing sentence of imprisonment. One is to sentence an offender to be confined and to be put to perform hard labour on the roads. The second is to sentence the criminal to be imprisoned and be made to work in the prison; and the third is to pass sentence of imprisonment only, without labour. These three modes may be adopted by the Daryâft-Kacheri in passing sentence against offenders according to the degree of guilt proved against them. 695 671 177 697

92. The Pârapatiagâr of each Nâd shall send in monthly to the Subadâr of his taluq a register of offenders punished by him. 692 671 177

93. The Subadâr in like manner shall send a register to the Daryâft-Kacheri, which will submit to the Huzur an abstract of their registers, including the offenders punished by their own award.

94. All disputes relating to caste are to be settled by the heads of the respective castes according to the usage and custom of the country. [564]